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Interview of Igor and Leslie Filson
18 September 03
113FW Maintenance

Tape Side 2
Interview with Capt Rasmassen and Leslie Filson.

F: This is Capt Rasmassen (?) of the 113 Wing on September 18, 2003. I want to here about what you guys were doing on 9-11, what happened and tell me the story.

R: Sure

F: What happened when you got up that morning?

R: It was a day like any other for the most part. I had just taken over as the chief of scheduling and pretty much the scheduling shop puts together the flying schedule for each daily doses. We have a weekly meeting on Tuesday mornings where we talk about the upcoming week and what's going to happen on the next calendar week. So, we just started our meeting and we were talking about what kind of sorties we were going to fly, what the priorities are and things like that. One of our intel folks just knocked on the door real quick and said "hey, an airplane just flew into the side of the World Trade Center" all of us in the meeting kind of looked at each other and looked outside the window, it was clear blue skies. It doesn't get anymore flying weather than that. So we thought "what kind of a moron can't see those big buildings right in front of them?" We all figured it was just some light civil aircraft, we call them bug smashers, little Cessna's Piper Cubs or whatever, someone doing some sight seeing flying up and down the Hudson and just not paying attention where he was going. We figured he just smashed into the side of the building. So we continued on with the meeting, thinking we'd catch the news clips later on in the day. So we continued on, about 15 or 20 minutes later, they came back and said that another aircraft had hit the other tower. At that point meeting adjourned, this is no longer a pure accident, somebody is meaning to do this. I think everybody knew that this was a coordinated attack that was happening. We had no idea who it was by, but it was definitely intentional when you get two airplanes hitting both towers.

F: How many people did you have in your meeting?

R: Probably 5 or 6

F: all pilots?

R: Some pilots, some flight management that sat in on that meeting as well. A couple of enlisted.

F: Okay

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R: So we broke up the meeting, went into the squadron bar, the TV was on they were watching the news and we were all just flabbergasted to see the replays and again – we all thought they were just light civil aircraft, not airliners.

F: So you hadn't been told that until you go watch TV?

R: Exactly, when you see the first tower burning, you can see the size of the scar in the side of the building. You knew immediately that that was no small airplane. Then to see the instant replays of the second airplane hitting.

F: Do you have any airline guys in the squadron?

R: Oh yea, there's tons. All the part-time guys, for the most part are airline pilots.

F: Yea

R: Just under shock, absolute bewilderment. You can't believe your eyes, you can't believe what you are seeing, it is surreal. At that point, we didn't know what we could possibly do, that's New York City way up the road. So mean while like everybody else in America were just standing by and watching the news. Time dilatation between the towers being hit and when the Pentagon was hit but the news break about the Pentagon being hit and by that time, they were in our back yard. At that point, the squadron leadership went into action. I think they were probably already on the phone talking to people wondering if there was anything that we could do to help out up in the alert, sending aircraft, sending people for help, whatever. As soon as the Pentagon was hit, we knew that we were going to be sticking around home and being quite busy. From my stand point, I was a wingman at the time, so I'm just kind of standing back waiting for somebody to task me with something. The squadron operations officer Col Sass (?) who is now the squadron commander, he was the operations officer at the time. Major Dan Kane (?) he was our weapons officer at the time. Both of them were on the phone talking to the maintenance squadron, the wing commander, running up and down the chain of command getting information. I believe the Secret Service started placing calls into our squadron wondering what we could do. Obviously, the protection of the Vice President and all that stuff was of concern for them. The President was out of town, so that base was covered at least from our point of view. But a lot of phone calls were being made trying to get permission to take action, to at least get jets airborne. At the time we had a couple of aircraft who were out on training sorties. I believe they were configured for air to ground missions. They had training bombs, some of them were down South and a couple of them were up North. You have a couple of different bombing ranges.

F: When you say South and North, how many miles. Is it pretty close to the area?

R: It is about a half of an hour drive from the firing range if you are flying 350 knots on the way back home, it is about a 30-minute drive. If they were parked in full throttle, probably 20 to 25 minutes.

F: So you have some judgement vicinity but not super close.

R: Right, exactly. Then the ones that were super close were already out of gas and on their way back home. They didn't have any extra fuel to work with. The supervisor of flying got on the radio, called down to flights, I believe BULLY was the call sign. Major Hutchinson was one of the pilots there and Lt Haagenfon, they were flying an air-to-ground mission. The SOF called them on the radio and said "come back home immediately." By the time they got back, I believe they actually landed and were taxiing back ?? and the SOF asked what their fuel state was. By this time, the Pentagon had been hit and just to have an aircraft on scene, he wanted to know if there was enough fuel to do a reconnaissance pass over the Pentagon and see what exactly was happening over there. So Maj Hutchinson had enough fuel to take off again, so he was the first airplane to pass over the Pentagon at that time. In essence, from my perspective, I was just waiting at the ops desk for someone to say "Okay we've been cleared to take off and go." I'd say within the hour we had received authorization with missiles, to arm up the guns and to take to the sky. So Sassaville (?) and Major Kane (?) both put down the phones after they'd gotten that authorization and said Sass looked at Capt Penny and said "you're flying with me and Raisin you're flying with Igor, do suit up and get out there a quick as possible." So we sprinted down the hallway to Life Support and through on our gear. You can imagine what the adrenalin level was like. Everybody's hearts just up in their throats. We were relieved to actually be given permission to go up and do something instead of feeling totally helpless. I mean we are fighter pilots, just like guard dogs chomping at the bit ready to go.

F: Who gave you authorization? Do you know.

R: Definitely, it had to come from the wing commander, since these are his jets. But he got permission from whoever higher up the chain. You can talk to him tomorrow to find out exactly the chain of command that they went through.

F: These are totally loaded F-15s then?

R: We had the first two jets to launch, Sass and Lucky, just had hot guns, hot cannons so they had training bullets. They were already loaded with that, so it was just a matter of pulling the pin and making them hot. With Raisin and I were the next two, we were probably 20 to 30 minutes behind then because they were loading heat seeking missiles on the aircraft. We had hot guns and 2 AIM-9s. Once they armed us up, we just rolled right down the runway and blasted off.

F: On a normal training sortie what kind of armament do you have?

R: It depends on the mission. If it is an air-to-ground mission – well blanket statement whether you are flying an air-to-air mission or an air-to-ground mission you are going to have a captive AIM-9 on board so you can always do air-to-air training.

F: So always an AIM-9 on board?

R: Yea, and it's always a captive AIM-9 so there is no war head, there's no booster rocket in there. Pretty much it is a piece of concrete with the actual missile head on there so you can still train as if it was a real missile, just nothing will come off of the jet. For an air-to-ground sortie, if you are going to be staping (?) using a cannon then they won't pon(?) the gun then you'll have you're training on board, called BDU-33's. Just a little training bomb that weighs about 25 pounds a piece.

F: Okay, so this is different, in the respect that...

R: These are real missiles.

F: How often have you flown with real missiles?

R: I've never flown with real missiles. I think the good majority have never flown with them. I know that both Sass and Raisin have shot live missiles before. I think Lucky may have shot a missile before. At Tyndall they've got the WESP program out there and they do live missile shoots.

F: You've never done that before, so this is a new thing for you?

R: Yea, I'd never flown with them before, never even so much as seen them on the jet.

F: Okay, go ahead.

R: So anyway we blast off and take to the air. The people that we were talking to at the time were Washington Center primarily to control us and give us an idea of the air picture.

F: Are you talking about FAA? On the radio?

R: Exactly, Washington Center normally controls all of the air traffic in this neck of the woods. They are not trained as weapons controllers obviously, we are use to working with either AWACS with the weapons controller/director on board or a ground controlled GCI squadron which is a ground based radar facility with weapons controllers who will give you the tactical air picture, control and coordinate who is targeting what aircraft and run the air war that way and also give us declaration. Unfortunately the F-16 we do not have an electronic type ??? capability, so we cannot autonomously identify somebody as a friend or a foe so we have to get declarations from off board.

F: The AWACS?

R: Yea, either the AWACS would declare hostile or GCI would declare hostile. But in essence at this point, we still haven't been told you are clear to engage anybody. They just said "get airborne as quick as you can."

F: What were you thinking?

R: Well, once we knew that they were using airliners, I think that everybody...the words that Raisin used when we were briefing real quick as we were suiting up he said "whatever you do don't be the first one to shoot, if you see me shoot unload." So he was taking the responsibility to take on that decision.

F: Is that your Sassaville(?)?

R: No, that is Kane (?)

F: Okay, got it.

R: So he said "let me be the first one to shoot, if it comes to that and then do what I do." So, a lot of mutual support that he was taking the responsibility.

F: Even through??

R: I'm like "okay, whatever you say, you're the flight lead, I'm just #2 here, I'll follow." So we get airborne and we start talking to Washington Center about what's going on and they are telling us that NORAD had implemented a SCATANA profile so they were landing everybody that was airborne.

F: Can you imagine, the people at ATC must have been dieing.

R: They had their hands full. I mean I've been out there on days when just normal air traffic is enough to saturate their scope and now to take people out of their flight plans and just put the at the nearest runway. They definitely had their hands full.

F: So by the time you were up, both towers and the Pentagon had been hit.

R: Yes

F: You know this.

R: Oh yes, we'd seen the footage. So the ATC guys are giving us a picture and trying to tell us who they are talking to and who they are not. Who we are concerned with was people who were not talking to ATC, and identify who they are and finding out what direction they are headed. That's our primary concern. At the time the four of us were airborne and I believe there were some F-15s the were airborne. I believe they came up from Langley, there may have been other F-15's from Langley, it is an air defense squadron.

F: So you were airborne, I think Otis would have been up by New Year. You are down here with the Fargo guys and Langley, the F-16's.

R: Right

F: But you don't know about each other?

R: Exactly, all we hear are call signs on the radio and it was pretty much a food fight at first. Kind of a frenzy, nobody taking charge of what's going on and everybody wanting to do something. So eventually what will happen is Raisin will take the hand and say "okay you're going to use Regan National as our bulls eye point and we are going to talk everything off of Regan National. So, Washington Center if you've got somebody who is unidentified give us a bearing and a range from Regan National so that we can find them. We took a quick mark over the point, so we had INS coordinates for that and then he passed that to everybody else and said "here's our record to go by."

F: What's INS coordinates?

R: Initial Navigation System, gives GPS coordinates, latitude, longitude, that sort of things. In essence that gives us a common point to talk off of. So regardless of where you were in the world, if we referenced this point, you can say somebody is north of bulls eye four or 32 miles and we can find them.

F: Right, is Raisin then talking to everybody on the radio?

R: Yes, everybody is up on Washington Center frequencies.

F: Normally, do you guys communicate with Washington Center?

R: We do, nobody comes in and out of the DC area without talking to them.

F: Okay,

R: Just the way the air space is built, you've got class 2B airspace around here and you cannot enter that without talking to ATC.

F: Okay

R: So we are on Washington Centers frequency and they are doing their best to tell us who people are. Because all we are doing is throwing our radars into everything we see, locking them up and asking Washington Center "hey, do you know who this guy is, do you know who this guy is....."

F: Can you give me an idea about where you were flying about this time and what are you seeing below and around you?

R: Well pretty much using the Pentagon as ground zero and Washington Reagan National as our stake in the ground.....

F: You can see the fire...

R: You can see the smoke, a big cloud of black smoke over the Pentagon. We are only 8 to miles away from the Pentagon as the crow flies. Once we got airborne, it wasn't difficult to see. We pretty much divided up the air space and said "okay, from Reagan National, you draw a line North South and you draw a line East West. We are going to break this up into quadrants so people don't bump into each other our there." We are spending a lot of time looking at our radarscope and scooting around all over the place. So, we needed to deconflict from each other. So we deconflicted in altitude and assigned people specific altitude blocks to work in and specific distances from Reagan to work from. I believe actually, the piece of airspace that I initially had was 20 to 40 miles to the Southwest of Reagan National. Raisin said "hey you've got this piece of sky, so find out what's happening in your neck of the woods." So, we all divided up the air space.

F: So there are four of you?

R: There's four of us from Andrews and at least another 2-ship of F-16's out of Langley, and more to some. I ended up running an intercept out of a 2-ship out of Richmond, 2-ship F-16 out of Richmond that just came flying North. In essence, we would find whatever we could on the radar. Ask Washington Center if they knew who it was and if they didn't, we would run an intercept on them to visual identify who they were.

F: When you say "to find anything that you could on the radar", that's your radar in your plane?

R: Exactly, I think that all of us probably ended up intercepting at least five or ten civilian aircraft a piece. A lot of them were helicopters that were headed for the Pentagon. Life flight, Medivac, you name it, Army choppers, Marine choppers, anybody who could get over to the Pentagon and land to medivac people out of there, were headed in that direction. Of course, all we see on our radarscope is a whole lot of radar contacts, moving, converging on the Pentagon. From our cockpit, we don't know who these people are and we can only assume or at least wonder, hey are these more aircraft inbound.....

F: Does every, on your radarscope would a helicopter look the same as an airliner?

R: Yes, they are little blips. There's nothing other than the information that we get once we actually take our radar lock. Then we can assess airspeed, altitude, ?? and things like that.

F: So if you get a radar lock, what are you doing? Are you calling the Center?

R: Yes, we say "I'm locked to a contact that is Northwest of bulls eye for 15 miles at 500 feet. Then they can look on their own radar screen and put their cursors over that piece of sky and say "yea we see who you are talking about, we are talking to them."

F: But this is kind of an unusual thing.

R: This is definitely an unusual thing. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever anticipate doing what we did on September 11th. It was flying defensive counter air over Washington DC. So we wound up visually identifying quite a few helicopters that were inbound to the Pentagon. The trouble with the helicopters was a lot of times because the altitude that they fly at they are so low, they don't have radio line of sight to make contact with Washington Center. They are just below the radar coverage, so Washington Center either doesn't see them or they are unable to communicate with them because they are to low to the ground.

F: Boy, so you guys are on your own there.

R: Exactly, we've got to try to identify everything that was moving. After about, we were airborne about 3 to 4 hours, had tankers airborne over downtown DC to give us fuel when needed and just one at time. If you felt like you needed to go get gas you said "hey, I'm headed to the tanker, somebody take by responsibility down here and we'd just move the pieces around so that every quadrant was covered.

F: Do you remember how many times you refueled?

R: I refueled twice during that period.

F: That's a pretty long mission right.

R: Oh yea, on average if you are flying an air-to-ground sortie which is usually the longest sortie of fly is usually about an hour and a half. So we were up there for a good 3 to 4 hours. That's quite a bit of flying.

F: Have you talked to your family at this point?

R: Well, I'd talked to my wife, she'd called me on my cell phone. Actually I take that back, I'd called her and told her that the towers had been hit. It was still relatively early in the morning and I told her to turn on the news and watch what was going on. She in turned called her family out in California and said "hey, turn on the TV, I know it's only 5 o'clock in the morning but something is going on." So they were talking back and forth and so when the Pentagon was hit, my mother-in-law just freaked, because for some reason, she thought I worked at the Pentagon. She didn't know that I worked at Andrews. I mean they all knew that it is just out there, it's Eastcoast is all the same neck of the woods. So she called my wife in hysterics.....I told my wife, I didn't know when I would be home again.

F: What's your wife's name?

R: Jennifer

F: You have kids?

R: We are foster parents, we have a foster son and we are expecting our first in February.

F: Congratulations

R: Let's turn this off and get Col Denaman (?) in here.

Tape Side 1

Lt Col Denaman (?) and Leslie Filson

F: Okay, we are picking up the interview with Lt Col Denaman(?) and what is your title?

D: The 113th Aircraft Generation Squadron Commander.

F: You said you had just gotten back from Red Flag, a couple days prior on that Sunday?

D: The jets got back from Nellis on Saturday, the 8th

F: Was that a two-week deployment?

D: Yes with ?? we just received two ? pods.

F: What is that?

D: That is a lizard designator pod, it is not under your plan at ?? The aircrews were working with it for the first time at Nellis on the range.

F: Okay

D: So, we returned, I was on the redetachment, I got back Sunday the 9th, Monday was a typical day off. We all came back into work on Tuesday morning. We did a regular training mission where we launched three jets out and were getting ready to turn for the afternoon, the airplanes were on their way back. For me personally, my wife had given me a call and said "hey, did you know that an airplane just crashed into the World Trade Center?" I said "no, but let me so downstairs and I'll go look on CNN." In the ?? office we have a big TV. We get down there and we being maintainers see that it's no small airplane that it is actually a large aircraft. We go back in the avionics office and we're all looking at the TV and the other one hit.

F: You all saw the second one hit then?

D: Yes.

F: And you were stunned.

D: Yes, we obviously know it's an attack of some sort. It started to go down to ops. I come to ops and there was some conversation going on that something's starting to

happen. Well, as you probably know, Major Hutchinson and the 3-ship had come back. Major Hutchinson lands, he still has not fueled. They told him to take off.

F: So he's the one that took off?

D: Yes, flying over the Pentagon, where the airplane...

R: Capt Rassmussen interjects....? munitions?

D: No munitions, but he sees the duck(?) station from the air point, it just hit the Pentagon and he was tracking up towards Pennsylvania and the other plane had already hit the ground as well. While this is happening, Chief Bell (?) and I are on the flightline, Major Sassville (?) Lt Col now, came out and said "I need some airplanes." So the chief is the prosuper, we looked and said "okay, take those two." So we put the pilots in and then we find out that we need live munitions on the airplanes.

R: Capt Ruassmassan interjects but it is inaudible.

F: Let me just get this straight, you have two planes that you are going to put them in that have guns, but no AIM-9's or anything.

(some discussion about hot guns, but inaudible)

D: We have another two that we need to launch and Sgt Bowen gets his guys to uncrate live AIM-9's and get them to the ramp.

F: You got two with guns and they have already taken off at this point.

D: Yes, we launched the guns and we are bringing up 5 AIM-9's to the ramp. Sgt Bowman runs munitions storage, he's got his guys with the missiles, uncrated or crated over from the munitions storage area on the other side of the base onto our flightline. It's Chief Garretts guys who load the missiles onto the airplane. So, for the last two, the pilots were sitting in the cockpit while we were loading live missiles onto the rails.

F: That's kind of weird.

D: That's the first time that had ever happened on Andrews AFB, that we know of.

F: There is actually people ready to go....

D: Loading live ammunitions, we work with training munitions and when we go to a place like Nellis, we'll do live bombs there, but all of the safety precautions are in place. The reduntments (?) for explosive safety, those sorts of things. When we go to fire live, we deploy to a base that had that capability and all of the safety factors were there. What we did, I'm not saying it was unsafe, I'm just saying it was unprecedeted because as I said the high ops temp that we had at Nellis AFB and just getting back for us to go back

into a "let's tighten up we're in a combat mode, let's make sure that all T's are crossed and I's are dotted, we've got to do this right." We had everybody who we needed to be here pretty much here, from a supervisory standpoint. The chief was already getting ready to reconfigure airplanes to get them ready to support whatever we were about to do. Now the ramp is not rated for explosive safety so when these airplanes are coming back we needed a place to put them. So at the time, down on taxiway echo that was the safest place on the base at the time to put one loaded aircraft. So when these airplanes came back we taxied them down there. We let the state police know that hey we have explosive loaded airplanes here, they said "we appreciate it, you can have our building, we're out of here", they took the helicopter and left and we took over their building.

F: What building is that?

D: The police barracks, the Merril (?) state police barracks.

R: While those two airplanes, the first two airplanes out there flying, the other two went up there real quick, while those 4 are still up there?? we are moving on to other operations and I by then I had the proper configuration of what ops said we needed to fly, as far as planes go. All this was going on, the missions were being delivered and we never stopped flying til....

D: From a supervisory standpoint to work out is we are going to 24-hour ops right now, so we said "okay, look you send home and come back at dark." We started working from 6 o'clock in the morning, and that was our shift change. From the 11th of September to Friday the 13th, guess it was Thursday. We flew 52 sorties, 181.2 flying hours, 60 consecutive hours of having two airplanes up or more, we would fly two into the CAP then combat air patrol basically a race track over the city. Then we'd have to launch to more in and get two down. At the same time, we had two standing by configured, 2X4 that's 2 AIM-9s and 4 AIM-120's to support the President, if the President was going to leave to go anywhere. We also flew CAPS for him to go from the White House to Camp David, we flew a CAP for that.

R: The thing to keep in mind is that we had a mission and

D: Right, we just didn't, in reality, when you think about the guardsman and the history of the minute man, we went from being regular old technician working our day to right into the combat mode flying combat air patrol missions over Washington DC. We really had a sense of pride we called our selves the capital guardians. Because that is what we were doing for the month of September.

F: You are all technicians full-time?

D: Yes

R: Our mission is we train for this but we don't train to do it here. We are trained from various locations to be able to deploy from here to go what ever ?? we are working out of to go to ?????

D: We had across the Logistics Group our traditional people were calling us, saying "hey, we see what happened, when do you want me out there?"

F: Don't you love that, everybody just wanted to be a part of what was going on.

D: Oh yea, without being tasked. Even my boss asked me "what are you going to do, this is just a couple of hours into this, I'm not sure what we are doing. We have responded and we have a shift schedule and we can cover with what we've got with 12-hour shifts and we are going to feed in as the people become available. But we don't know what we are up for right now."

R: Some of us stayed here for two days, just to get through a complete schedule change and make sure everything was going, it was impossible to hand everything over because it was changing every.....

D: Right, you had to be here to stay with everything that was going on.

R: Probably three days into it before we really got in to it, we were working ...

D?(maybe someone else): I wasn't here, I was on leave. I knew after the second plane hit that they would call me. Then an hour later – 15 minutes later I got another phone call, they wanted me to come in later to be a supervisor for the night shift.

D: I spent the night on a cot in a sleeping bag. I called my wife and said "look I can't go home" a lot of guys did that and the other was that we didn't even think about. Getting on base the next day, it took us 3 hours to get to work. Once they got to the base.

R: ??? it was easier just to ???

D: That Tuesday, everybody wasn't at work. We'd just came off of a trip, it was a light day. There was some people that needed another day to get settled in. People who had changed jobs over the years had reverted back to things they had done in the past – to help get us from point A to point B. To give you an example, the AGS Supintendent was Chief Jones, he use to be a weapons guy, well he knew I didn't need any help with what I was doing, but he knew the weapons guys needed help. Well, I look around, he was heading for the ??? So people went back and did things, they used all their skills and...we really didn't fill our positions until we got the mission complete. Then we started getting back to whatever normal is.

F: That's crazyness.

R: I feel that a lot of the things that we'd done like ??? and ??? exercises that allowed us to have the skills necessary to train to make the proper decisions when this type of thing happens. You use all the skill you have to make this happen.

F: It shows you that it's worth it.

R: Exactly, I think that's important

F: Now you said and gave me the statistics, 52 sorties in just a few days. How many sorties do you guys normally fly a week, before 9-11 how many sorties a week?

D: We were doing about basically about 6 turn 6. That's 6 in the morning and then 6 in the afternoon.

R: Twelve a day

D: Yea, twelve a day.

R: To my knowledge, we did not miss one mission that we had.

F: Your jets had to be pretty well up to speed to keep it going.

D: Well, after we were flying those initial 60 hours, here's another pretty incredible thing. We didn't have any AIM-120's on this base, so on Friday night, a C-130 came in here at midnight with 120's and with two performance (?) guys unloading the airplane. Chief Garrett's guys, they reconfigured airplanes to what was required to continue the mission.

R: The actual C-130 landed and parked right out on echo ????? and they unloaded the aircraft.

D: I called it poetry in motion. There was C-130's going around, the door flew open, the airplane still running, they are all ??? nothing was stopped. They rolled on the building started ????? to load to the airplane, to load crews, all I had to do was tell them what airplane. It was all I could do to keep up with them.

F: Where did the C-130 come in from?

D: I can't remember, I think Otis, I have their call sign in my notes.

R: Also 20 millimeter, HEI ????

D: It was non stop, it was unbelievable and knock on wood, no injuries, no snags.

R: It is funny when you look back at it, it is almost like you've watched a movie.

D: ??? If you didn't bring it with you, you didn't eat. You couldn't leave base, you couldn't leave your work center and there wasn't anything open on base that didn't need to be open. Guys were showing up with crock-pots that their wives and mother-in-laws had fixed. It turned into, you couldn't everything that people were bring in. We can't emphasize to you enough, the people who left their regular jobs, who just showed up. And the pride that everybody had contributed to what everybody was doing. There was no complaints, they were happy to be involved. They were doing a great job at it.

R: If you told them to get their bags..... (inaudible)

R: From the safety aspect, nobody got hurt nothing fell. Everything was perfect, everything worked. But the time it takes to get a missile out of the container to get the fin on to put the wings on to deliver it. It takes a while and to cut that down just to get it up in a hurry, I mean 45 minutes to get jets hanging, we didn't do it unsafely, but we did it really fast.

F: Is that what you guys say "jets hanging" I hadn't heard that one.

R: Meaning getting missiles on..... it takes 15 minutes to drive from munitions storage to get here.

F: Explain to me then, when you got the initial word, take me through the processing and how crazy was that?

D: We were watching TV, you get a call to watch TV. The next call is "get the missiles out" now you've got to run back a good 100 yards behind your admin building to get to the bays which are alarmed. Turn the alarm off, open the doors, pull them out and just start right there on the ground, open containers, taking the missiles out, putting them on the lids of the containers....

F: You guys were trying to be fast, but be safe, is that it?

D: Exactly, but you were doing it fast and safe at the same time. I'll tell you that because we have a checklist that we are suppose to follow. I can tell you that I didn't grab that on the way out. We already knew what we are suppose to do. You pull them out and set the containers on the ground, the missile comes out and goes right back on top of the container and someone has to hold that while you ????? the wings on.

F: How many of you were there?

D: There were six of us there.

F: Would you say a normal process would be about 45 minutes?

D: No, no, no

F: How much is normal?

D: It should have took 3 hours really to get all of those out.

F: How long did it take you?

D: About 45 minutes and we broke out initially 28.

F: Can you explain to me how dropped ones would go off and what are you talking about?

R: The guidance head in an AIM-9 is heat seeking. "I'm sorry you speak"

D: There's three components, guidance head, targeted section and the war head and the rocket mode. All explosives work on a train, so if you drop it, it is not going to fire, but you can

(conversation inaudible – laughing)

F: So there's six of you and you run to what do you call it? The weapons storage or what?

D: Munitions storage ... (inaudible)

F: So you are uncrating them and putting them on the what?

D: Trailer

F: Okay, and then you brought the trailer to?

(inaudible conversation)

D: The bobcat won't do over 25, so at max 25 miles per hour.

F: So driving as fast as the thing would go.

F: What do you think they had in their minds at this point? You knew that the two towers and the Pentagon had been hit at this point?

D: Yea, we could see the smoke

F: You could see the smoke from here?

R: The Air Force One hangar is right across the ramp from us and I personally was looking up at the sky They just hit the Pentagon, who knows how many of them were still up there.

D: Not know what was next.....(inaudible)

R: But to know that you are launching to the point, wherever that is, we are getting there.

D: Another things that needs to be mentioned also is ...

(inaudible conversation)

D: We had one of our members in the Egress shop who's father was on the plane that crashed into the Pentagon.

F: Oh, no, was he working at the time?

D: He was a retired navy aviator, 71 years old, she works out here. She knew her father was on the way out to California.

F: That's a terrible...

D: That was a business trip wasn't it?

F: What is her rank?

D: SSgt Jennifer Yamnicky

F: Is it Jennifer?

D: Yes

F: Can you repeat the last name?

D: Yamnicky, she is here today.

F: That was the flight that hit Pennsylvania?

D: No, the flight that hit the Pentagon. Her father was on board the airplane.

R: I know we had several guys, one is flight, his wife worked at the Pentagon.

D: There was one or two others who go to out church, she worked in the Pentagon. She was killed.

F: So this is close to home for you guys. It is happening right here in your backyard.

D: Yea, and like I said, our families are all worried about us. We are okay, everything is fine. It is just sitting on uneasiness for the first 24-hours or so that I'm not coming home, I can't come home, we have things that we are doing here. They are watching the TV.

Fortunately for us we were so busy that we couldn't spend time watching the World Trade Center collapse or watching the screaming or watching people jump out of the building. We are busy doing our mission and....

R: I think that says a lot for the people who are actually out here volunteering.

D: Yea, I felt bad about three days later. By then...

F: ??? look what just happened here....

F: Let me back up on something, you said it took you about 45 minutes to get those things loaded – on the planes or to the planes?

D: To the planes

F: Then your folks pick up and tell me what that was like.

D: ??? we put two AIM-9's on the first two planes and then every plane after two AIM-9's. So immediately when they pulled up it took them probably no more than 10 minutes a missile.

(inaudible conversation)

D: As soon as they were snapped on that checked, they started cranking the motors.

R: From that point on the flight chief said "echo" and I started ???? everything that was ready to fly down there. We started reconfiguring airplanes and by the time the jets landed, we were up and loaded, continuous flying.

F: Okay

D: Lt Col Cambell? He's the maintenance squadron commander, he was negotiating with the state police saying "hey guys here's what's going on, we are coming down here and you are going to be in this area" and the officer that was in charge said "all right Colonel here's the keys, let us know when we can come back."

F: So the first two planes have...I think I might have gotten confused, they have how much on them?

R: The first two planes we launched had 511 rounds of ammo,

D: 20 mm

F: 511 rounds of ammo?

D: Practice ammo...

R: It would take down an airplane.

F: Okay

R: The next two we learned had the same ammo count plus an AIM-9 missile.

F: So the first two were guns only?

R: From then on it was guns and missiles on everything ??? The next two that we would launch after that would have two AIM-9s on it. From there we continued that scenario until the 120th came in - (*inaudible conversation about 120's*)

F: So, by Friday then they were full up?

R: Configuration of AIM-9s and AIM-120s.....(*inaudible*) at one time we had 12 or 13 sitting on echo.

D: I had other airplanes sitting up here on the ramp and were ready to go. They just didn't have any munitions on them, so if somebody down there broke or had a problem, we just rolled them in and out. The flying schedule was a moving target, this is what you are committing to right now but ????? four airplanes just in case ??? moved.

F: So let me get the official, how long do you think it took you to get those first planes going?

R: The first two missiles in?

F: Yea

D: The airplanes were ready by the time the missiles got

R: From the time he was told to bring the missiles back here, we were waiting on him and ready to go. From the time we got the call, we had those missiles on them and the jets in the air within probably an hour.

R: Like he was talking about reconfiguration, the things that needed to be done, a lot of these aircraft were coming back from air-to-ground missions which was dropping 25 lb bombs. (*inaudible pilot talk*) as the weapons guy, I was dropping ???

D: Remember Steve P??? he works in munitions. You said "Steve it is a good thing you decided to do

R: Steve loaded the ammo, we parked the airplanes on Saturday, when we got back. One of the weapons guys looked at Tuesdays limited flying schedule. He decided to put some ammo in the jets because when the went to Nellis all of the ammo was out of the airplanes. (*inaudible*) the airplanes all returned empty. So Steve took it upon himself

and a load crew that day to put some ammo in that was they wouldn't be in a rush on Tuesday morning. I went over and kissed him, I said "if you hadn't have done that we'd been dead in the water."

D: We could have flown airplanes, but they couldn't have done anything.

R: We would have had to wait for them to bring it.....?? by Steve's "hey I'm here I want to go ahead and get a gain for Tuesday", he was thinking local flying and just to help us out a little bit, he did that.

F: What is Steve's name and title again?

D: MSgt Joseph Proctor

F: He goes by Steve?

D: Yea

F: Proctor

D: Yep

F: Okay, what I want to do is get a contact phone number if I need you later. Are you my contact?

D: Sure

F: The other thing, do you guys have pictures of your crew, you guys working, that you can share?

D: I can check with photolab and see what they have.

R: They took pictures, but people ran them off...

D: The security level on the base peeked right up and what I told the guys....we called the state police barracks the bears den and we went into not seeing things over the radio that we were doing the day before, so aircraft tail numbers are no longer You aren't going to see an AIM-9, we went into a code, so we started our own security there and I was telling people. "You don't need to go home tonight and tell your wife andthat we have airplanes out here loaded to the teeth." I don't think Joe public wants to know all that. The intel, we had a couple weird things that were coming through intel.

R: (inaudible)

D: Helicopters that they saw the night before and went dark and stuff is flowing through intel. I asked the intel guy to come down and brief us if you find anything out. Maybe

there is something going on outside the gate, we can no longer go home in uniform, we have to be in civilian clothes when we come to work and when we go home.

R: ?? motion detector ??? echo (*inaudible*)

D: ??? it was like a movie.

F: How many ramps are on Andrews?

R: There is a lot of ramps

D: Yea, there is all kinds of different airplanes here. But from a fighter standpoint, there is us and the Marines with F-18's next door. Now they don't carry the same type munitions.

R: The base is an ATC base, so it probably uses live munitions too.

F: Right

D: When the president came back to Washington, he landed at Andrews, we had four more airplanes that were from the Texas unit that escorted them up here. So they landed, they were configured the same way. (*inaudible conversation*) now they are with us and we are turning their jets.

F: They said you guys were really nice, by the way.

R: That was the deal on CNN, they escorted the President back, but that was Mark Sass..?

F: Well, CNN doesn't know what is what, they talk about F-16's and show F-15's.

D: :We have a sense of accomplishment, we really sense that we are contributing and making things happen. You could see the pride in the guys when they came to work. They wanted to be out there. Whatever you wanted them to do they would do for you.

R: Which is pretty much norm anyway, but overflowing I guess.

D: Yes

R: It was a very sobering fact to drive around that runway and (*inaudible*) like a movie, all of the sudden there is an entry control point out here. The cops are on the scene.

D: Especially at night, I worked the nights too myself. You see jets flying, landing at night with all lights out ????? on the runway.

R: Watching them take off in the middle of the night with ???

F: That's something else.

R: If you can't stop and take a look at that, you are probably in the wrong business.

D: And to see them when they broke left when they took off, they were going, you never see them go that way, they were going way over the city. That was kind of different too, even the first two that took off, even when ??? took off, he was in burner banking low going right towards the White House, right over the top of the city.

F: You guys usually take off the other way.

D: I think there are flight restrictions that don't allow you to fly over the city like that, but at that moment that was the....it was just incredible to watch.

F: Is there anything else I'm leaving out?

R: These are the movers and shakers of this unit, these guys right here.

D: That changed this unit forever, because now I think we have a different commitment here.

R: I think the difference here is if we were an active duty unit. We would have had load crews here and people that were standing by and that may be all the people that you needed. But there would have been more people available to do the job. Whereas, we had a handful of people who did the same job in the same time.

F: It is an amazing story, I get to talk to a lot of people about it. It is something else.

D: Also, we flew 400 hours in the month of September.

R: Yea, there for a while we were getting 4 or 500 hours a month.

F: Did you talk to a lot of other media about it?

D: It is kind of frustrating at first, since you are working ?? 20/20 ?? flying the CAP and you are in day 9, I'm up there and the PA person came.....(tape ended)

END OF TAPE SIDE 1

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